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The Neo-Aramaic Manuscripts of the British Library: Notes on the Study of the Dorekyatha as a Neo-Syriac Genre

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THE NEO-ARAMAIC MANUSCRIPTS
OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY: NOTES ON THE STUDY
OF THE *DURIKYĀTĀ* AS A NEO-SYRIAC GENRE

In 1923 the British Museum purchased eight manuscripts from Eduard Sachau (1845-1930), now registered as nos. 9321-9328 of the Oriental and India Office collection. Together with the better-known Berlin Sachau collection,² they bear witness to Sachau's interest in Neo-Aramaic and Arabic folk poetry,³ and they constitute the most important Western source for our knowledge of Neo-Aramaic literature.

As in the Berlin collection, several dialects are represented: a number of *duriyātā* are written in the Alqosh poetic koine (especially Or. 9321-9322); Or. 9327 is a copy of the Gospel of St John in Turoyo; and various texts of the miscellaneous Or. 9321 are written in other dialects, from the region of Hakkari to the Persian Azerbaijan. Beside the *duriyātā* — which represent, as it were, the learned form of Neo-Aramaic poetry — the Or. 9321 contains poems and tales belonging to more popular genres, such as short prose tales, humorous sayings, metrical fables and dialogue poems, wedding and love songs, and songs for children. Where the Berlin Sachau collection contains a Turoyo translation of the story and proverbs of Aḥiqar, in the London Sachau collection we find an Eastern Neo-Aramaic version of that masterpiece of Aramaic literature. As in the case of the Berlin collection, all the Neo-Aramaic texts are accompanied by an Arabic translation, probably at Sachau's explicit request.

¹ This study is part of a research project, supported jointly by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Research School CNWS (Leiden University). The main purpose of the project is the publication — complete with translation, commentary, and glossary — of a selection of *duriyātā* by Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe (17th cent.). For the generous and stimulating help provided during the preparation of this study, I am very grateful to scholars and students associated in some way with what I refer to as the Leiden School for Syriac and Neo-Syriac Studies: Lucas Van Rompay, Pier Giorgio Borbone, Heleen Murre-van den Berg, Dirk Kruisheer, and Barsaum Can.

² The Berlin collection has been described in detail and studied by Lidzbarski, who published a rich selection of excerpts in *Lidzbarski Handschriften*.

³ During his stay in Mosul and Alqosh in 1880, Sachau had an opportunity to learn the Neo-Aramaic dialect spoken in the Christian villages of the plain of Mosul (Sachau *Skizze* 4-5, *Reise* 355). *Fellihī* in Sachau's terminology, this Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialect is also known as *Sureṭ* (*Sūrīt* in Arabic); it is related to a kind of literary koine developed in the region around Alqosh, a village situated about 40 km to the North of Mosul. See Guidi *Beiträge* 294, Sachau *Skizze* 3-4, *Über die Poesie* 180, Rhétoré *Grammaire* i n.1, Macuch *Geschichte* 67-69, Pennacchietti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 13 and 103, *Teschio redivivo* 107 n.7. Tsereteli *Aramaic dialects of Iraq* 248 calls it the dialect of Mosul.

The importance of the London collection is not based solely on Neo-Aramaic dialectology and literature. The mss. Or. 9323-9324 contain a collection of Arabic folk songs with the Neo-Aramaic translation.⁴ The mss. Or. 9325-9326 and Or. 9328 contain, not only shorter pieces of Arabic and Neo-Aramaic literature, but also letters to Sachau from monks, clergymen, and copyists. Some of these are official letters, others requests for payment, but as a whole they provide a vivid insight into the way Sachau collected his material and the nature of his correspondence with informants and acquaintances in the Middle East.

Western scholars have strongly criticized Sachau's method of collecting Neo-Aramaic documents, deploring the inadequacy of the Syriac orthography for reproducing the phonology of the modern dialects.⁵ Notwithstanding their limitations for purposes of scholarly investigation, the texts that Sachau copied or recorded on paper represent a primary source for our knowledge and study of Neo-Aramaic linguistics, in both a dialectal and a diachronical sense.⁶ Publications by Pennacchietti and Poizat have shown the importance of the earlier texts in documenting the historical development of Neo-Aramaic morphosyntax and lexicon.

On a literary level, Sachau's collections represent a particularly intriguing corpus. The freshness and vivacity of the Neo-Aramaic folk poems immediately gained favour among Western scholars; in the love songs, in particular, they saw a continuation of the poetics of the Song of Songs, unknown to the classical Syriac tradition.⁷ The folk pieces collected by Sachau may be a somewhat limited linguistic resource, but they do represent a unique record and a precious testimony to a folklore which would be otherwise difficult or impossible to access.⁸

The learned genre of the *durikyātā* was received less enthusiastically. Nöldeke's reaction to the first text editions by Sachau and Lidzbarski has the ring of a final verdict: the religious literature is monotonous and unpoetic; in comparison with the wedding songs, the learned poetry is exceedingly tedious and prolix.⁹ This assessment sealed the fate of the

⁴ These texts possibly served as the working material for Sachau *Arabische Volkslieder*.

⁵ See, e.g., Rosenthal *Die aramaische Forschung* 260, who essentially repeats Nöldeke's arguments; Socin and Guidi, and recently Pennacchietti, have tried to remedy this difficulty, transcribing the Syriac texts with the assistance of a native speaker.

⁶ Macuch stresses the importance of the Berlin Sachau collection, notably because it preserves old dated texts (Macuch *Geschichte* 91-92).

⁷ Nöldeke's enthusiasm for Neo-Aramaic love songs was first expressed in Nöldeke *Socin* 679-680.

⁸ On the difficulties in collecting material for the study of Neo-Aramaic folk literature, see, e.g., Pennacchietti *Zmiryata-d rawe* 641-643.

⁹ Nöldeke *Recensionen* 305, commenting on the *durikyātā* published by Lidzbarski: "Einen erfreulichen Contrast zu diesen vortrefflich gemeinten, aber eintönigen und unpoetischen Gedichten bildet der folgende Abschnitt, bestehend aus einer grossen

texts in Europe for decades to come. In 1908 Vandenhoff translated several poems by Joseph of Telkepe and followed Sachau's intuition in looking for parallels in late East-Syriac literature.¹⁰ But after that, we had to wait until the seventies for the next scholarly studies and text editions of *durikyātā*.¹¹

Nöldeke was certainly right, if he considered the texts as bedside reading, but in order to be correctly understood and evaluated, the Neo-Aramaic poems deserve a more accurate study, as befits a significant historical product of a literary tradition; the *durikyātā* were written with a specific function in mind and they were — and are — used in a specific context. The aim of the present article is to make a contribution in this direction. It is based on a detailed analysis of the London Neo-Aramaic manuscripts (Appendix I), as well as on recent publications in the field.¹² The first section deals with formal aspects of the *durikyātā* and the history of their transmission. In the second section, the religious poetry in the vernacular language will be presented, as a working hypothesis, in the context of the late East-Syriac liturgical tradition. Both form and content of the *durikyātā* point to a definition of the genre as Neo-Syriac, open to external influences, but essentially emerging and developing in continuity with Syriac liturgical poetry.

1. The philological study of the genre of the *durikyātā*

The purpose of the following pages is not to present an exhaustive study of the history of the genre, complete with authors, dates, works, and internal development.¹³ I will confine myself to a general presentation of what is understood by the term *durikṭā* (1.1); an overview of the historical transmission of the texts (1.2), and a number of examples of problems connected with their philological study (1.3). Wherever possible, the examples are drawn from early as well as later texts. More infor-

Anzahl jener frischen Volksliedchen, wie wir sie durch Socin haben kennen lernen." According to Macuch (*Geschichte* 102), Nöldeke's criticism can be extended to all the Neo-Aramaic religious poetry.

¹⁰ Vandenhoff *Vier Gedichte*.

¹¹ See the contributions by Habbi, Haddad, Poizat, and Pennacchietti in the bibliography.

¹² I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti (Torino), Prof. Bruno Poizat (Lyon), and Dr. Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden) for their valuable suggestions and for providing me with unpublished material on the Neo-Aramaic poems.

¹³ For a general overview, see Sachau *Über die poesie*, Macuch *Geschichte* 98-106, Habbi *Udabā' as-sūriṭ* (up to Šomo *La peste de Pioz*, 18th cent.), and *Turāṭ* (19th cent.).

mation on the various texts and manuscripts of *durikyātā* mentioned in this section is provided in the concordance table and the list of abbreviations in Appendix II.

1.1. Metre and style of the *durikyātā*

The Neo-Aramaic *duriktā* is used for Syriac *mēmra*, *soḡitā* and possibly also *ʿoniṭā*,¹⁴ and thus would appear to include any poem used as a liturgical hymn, without specific reference to one of the classical genres. The origin of the term *durik* or *duriktā* (plural *durikyātā*) is not completely clear. Maclean suggested that it is derived from the root *drk* “to tread, to step upon”, and presented it as an equivalent of the Syriac *madrāšā*, meaning “religious poem, hymn”.¹⁵ Pennacchiotti ventures the hypothesis that the word *duriktā* means something like a “two-line strophe/verse”, and is actually a loan from Kurdish *dū* “two” and *rêk* “in good order”.¹⁶ There is also the possibility that we are dealing with a genuine East-Aramaic (Mesopotamian) word that did not enter the Syriac vocabulary but was indirectly recorded by Theodore bar Koni in his *Liber Scholiorum*.¹⁷

In our manuscripts, a *duriktā* is an extended song, consisting of 35 to 702 stanzas. The length of the poems usually ranges from around 60 to 250 stanzas. The longer poems may be a combination of different sections or perhaps parts of the texts were originally separate and distinct, but merged at some stage of their transmission. The shortest poem is the hymn *On Shmuni and her seven sons* by Israel of Alqosh, which num-

¹⁴ For a description of the genres in use in East-Syriac liturgical poetry, see Baumstark *Geschichte* 303–304.

¹⁵ Maclean *Dictionary* 63, followed by Pennacchiotti *Due pagine* 703, who interprets it as meaning “rhythmic step” (> “metrical foot”?). In the spelling of the catalogue of Urmia College, the same word seems to be related to the root *dr̥g* “to step forward” (Sarau *Catalogue of Oroomiah* p. 20 nr. 109, p. 26 nr. 150, p. 29 nr. 171, p. 31 nr. 184; see Syriac and Jewish Aramaic *dargā* “step”, Syriac *ḏargā* “a step”).

¹⁶ Pennacchiotti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 43 n. 194. The Kurdish etymology may explain the non-Aramaic singular form *durik*, alternating with the more Aramaic *duriktā*.

¹⁷ In an account of all heresies known at the time, the 8th-century Syriac author introduces a quotation from a hymn of the Dostaeans — a “Syro-Mesopotamian” gnostic sect probably related to Mandaism (Kruisheer *Early Mandaism*) — with the formula: “They say in their hymn (*zmirtā*), which they call ‘*drkt*’ against the Sorceresses” (Scher *Theodorus bar Koni*, vol. 2, p. 346, l. 20.). The sectarian term ‘*drkt*’, apparently unknown in Syriac, is associated with the common *zmirtā* “song, hymn”. This section of the *Liber Scholiorum* contains a number of “words, unknown in Classical Syriac, that for the most part can be explained as Mandaic” (Kruisheer *Early Mandaism* 162). The term ‘*drkt*’ is not recorded either in Syriac or Mandaic dictionaries, but it is not difficult to recognize its etymological and semantic affinity with the Neo-Aramaic *duriktā*. The first ‘*alef*’ probably represents a prosthetic vowel, common in Mandaic (Macuch *Handbook* 124–125).

bers 35 stanzas in all the witnesses. The longest one is the *duriktā On the divine economy* by Joseph of Telkepe, which consists of 702 stanzas in the ms. Habbi 3. A perusal of this impressively long poem reveals its structure, articulated in a prologue on creation (36 stanzas), a narrative section on the life of Christ, and an epilogue in form of a penitential hymn (39 stanzas).¹⁸ Longer or shorter prologues and epilogues are common to most of the *durikyātā*.¹⁹

The verses are composed according to a syllabic pattern. The seven-syllable line seems to be the favourite metre of Neo-Aramaic poetry in its learned form as well as in the folk genres,²⁰ but eight-, ten-, and twelve-syllable²¹ lines are also attested. A stanza may consist of 3 or 4 lines with the same rhyme (rhyme pattern AAA or AAAA); assonances and imperfect rhymes seldom occur at the end of a verse. Stanzas of 6 lines are normally structured in rhymed couplets (rhyme pattern ABABAB).²² The rhyme individuates and generates the structure of all the stanzas of a poem. The closing stanzas of some poems display more freedom with regard to metre and rhyme pattern.²³ Sometimes a verse or a few words are added as a refrain at the end of each stanza.

Rhyme is not an innovation of Neo-Aramaic poetry. Its popularity in late East-Syriac liturgical poetry is a distinctive feature as opposed to Syriac poetic production in the classical period.²⁴ The hymns of George

¹⁸ Sachau *Über die Poesie* 185.

¹⁹ This kind of structure is customary in the East-Syriac *ʿonyātā* (Baumstark *Geschichte* 303). The prologue may contain a prayer to Christ or to Mary or an exhortation directed at the audience, usually addressed to Christians or to Christian people; sometimes the prologue gives a kind of prior history of the narrative. The epilogue is usually in form of a prayer, a plea for intercession, for example, that the Lord may be merciful to the poet, the copyist or the listeners, now or at the end of their lives.

²⁰ Pennacchiotti *Zmiryata-d rawe* 644, *La versione nearamaica* 173. The seven-syllable line is also the most common metre in classical Syriac poetry (Hölscher *Syrische Verskunst* 54) and is, with few exceptions, the normal metre in the dispute/dialogue *soḡyātā* (Brock *Dispute poems* 112).

²¹ Nöldeke recognizes in the Neo-Aramaic stanza of four rhyming twelve-syllable lines the classical metre of Jacob of Serug, but used without any regard for the *caesurae*, as is quite common in late Nestorian poetry (*Recensionen* 304). Hölscher sees the same twelve-syllable verse without *caesurae* as a late Syriac equivalent of the Arabic *raḡaz* (*Syrische Verskunst* 7, quoting as an example a Syriac poem by Gabriel of Mosul, end 13th cent.).

²² See, for example, the *durikyātā* of the ms. London Sachau 9322 (Appendix I).

²³ This may be a characteristic feature of the East-Syriac *ʿoniṭā*: see Baumstark *Geschichte* 303, Hölscher *Syrische Verskunst* 57–58, Bundy *George Warda* 9–10.

²⁴ Baumstark *Geschichte* 303. The *opinio communis* is that rhyme was introduced into the Syriac tradition under the influence of Arabic poetry between the 12th and 14th centuries (Hölscher *Syrische Verskunst* 12–14). But it is also possible that it was actually re-introduced in the late poetry (Brock *Hymnography* 78), having been almost systematically avoided by authors of the classical period, but used and preserved over centuries in a poetic production with a prominent popular flavour (Baumstark *Altsyrische Profandichtung, Weihnachtslieder* 197).

Warda (13th century), for example, are written in a metre very similar to most of the *durikyātā*: a stanza of four seven-syllable lines which rhyme with each other.²⁵ On the other hand, rhyme is well known as a formal component of Arabic and Kurdish poetry, which may have had some influence on the formation of the Neo-Aramaic literary tradition.²⁶

Formally, the poems are characterized by the use of sound effects: parallelism, chiasms, repetition of the same morphological patterns in the same position. All or part of the last verse of a stanza is often repeated or varied slightly at the beginning of the following (*concatenatio*); sometimes only the word order is changed in order to obtain a new rhyme. Like many of the Syriac liturgical texts, a *duriktā* may contain stanzas beginning with words in alphabetical order.²⁷ Another stylistic characteristic is the abundance of apostrophes, exclamations, and deprecations introduced by particle such as "oh, ah, lo, blessed be who..., woe to me...!". The exclamatory elements often mark as anaphoras the beginning of each stanza or group of stanzas, giving the text a vivid, somewhat baroque, rhetorical form. A remarkable element, notably in the poems of Israel of Alqosh, is the use of the *copia verborum*, employed in order to juxtapose genuine Aramaic — often Syriac — terms and loan words, such as pairs or series of synonyms.

All these rhetorical features together create the rhythmical framework of the poems: rhyme, rhythm, and style combine to form a simple text, suitable to be set to music, easy to recite, to learn by heart, and to sing. Nöldeke is aware of the problem of the relation between Neo-Aramaic *Versform* and singing technique as regards his favourite folk songs,²⁸ but this aspect has yet to be investigated in relation to the liturgical melodies used to perform the *durikyātā*.²⁹ In reconstructing the text, it is important

²⁵ Hilgenfeld *Ausgewählte Gesänge* 7; Bundy *George Warda* 9. This is the customary metre of the hymns belonging to the classical genre of the 'oniā (Baumstark *Geschichte* 303).

²⁶ Pennacchiotti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 14 n. 7. A comparison between the Neo-Aramaic three-line stanza with the metres of Bedouin Arabic and Kurdish folk poetry is to be found in Pennacchiotti *Zmiryāta-d rāve* 644 n. 12.

²⁷ See, e.g., the central part of Hormizd of Alqosh *On repentance* (Sachau *Über die Poesie* 184). For the use of acrostics in George Warda, see, e.g., Hilgenfeld *Ausgewählte Gesänge* 7 or Sauget *Un gazzā* 73 ff. Alphabetic constructions and acrostics are also common in the poems of 15th-century Classical Syriac authors such as Isaac Eshbadnaya and Sargis bar Wahle (Baumstark *Geschichte* 330). Some Syriac alphabetic *soḡyātā* have been published by Kirschner *Alfabetische Akrosticha*.

²⁸ Nöldeke *Recensionen* 305.

²⁹ In the manuscripts, melodies are occasionally mentioned in the incipit. As in the classical liturgy, they are conventionally referred to by number or identified by the verse of a classical hymn: e.g., Habbi 3 p. 127 "with the metre nr. 2" or *Recueil* 1896 265, 276 *b-qālā d-* "to the tune of" (in *Recueil* 1954, all melodies are notated by number); in the collection London Sachau 9322, the melodic pattern for each poem is indicated in a small red square next to the title.

to ascertain whether the frequent irregularity of the syllabic structure of the verses is tolerated by the metrical (melodic) form of the cantillation, or is due to corruption in the manuscripts.

1.2. History of the transmission

As far as we know, the texts of the *durikyātā* were transmitted by Iraqi Christian communities, which today are part of the Chaldean Church.³⁰

A first distinction has to be made between the *durikyātā* occasionally copied at the end of manuscripts containing Syriac works and the texts transmitted in separate manuscript collections. To date, the oldest copy of a single poem in the vernacular language is to be found in the Syriac manuscript 3121 of the Marburg Library, now in Berlin, dated Alqosh 1734. This manuscript contains Syriac works by 'Abdišo' bar Briḳā (14th century), but the last three pages are devoted to the Neo-Aramaic poem *On Shmuni and her seven sons* by Israel of Alqosh.³¹ The few Neo-Aramaic poems preserved in the manuscripts of the Mingana collection (Birmingham) were similarly copied in the 18th century together with Syriac texts.³²

Joseph of Telkepe seems to be the first Neo-Aramaic author whose work was copied in separate collections, as early as the first decades of the 18th century. Unfortunately, these early collections are known only from descriptions in catalogues, as in the case of three manuscripts which once were in the Library of Urmia College.³³ They preserved Joseph of Telkepe's poems in the same order as in later collections.³⁴ Similarly, there was a manuscript in the Episcopal Library of Mardin, dated 1724, which contained a poem in three parts *On the life and the*

³⁰ Habbi *Udabā' as-sūrit*; Poizat *Complainte* 162-163 lists and describes various collections of early poems; for a short presentation of the tradition of the *durikyātā*, with mention of a number of printed editions, see Pennacchiotti *La versione neoaramaica* 171-172.

³¹ Assfalg *Syrische Handschriften* nr. 58, p. 125-127.

³² Mingana ms. 51 has no date and is made up of pieces taken from different manuscripts (East-Syriac hands of 1550-1750): Mingana *Catalogue* col. 149. Mingana ms. 567 is dated Zāwītā 1744 according to the colophon: *Catalogue* col. 1078.

³³ Sarau *Catalogue of Oroomiah* no. 109 p. 20 (dated 1724); no. 150 p. 26 (18th cent. ?); no. 171 p. 29 (1702).

³⁴ Compare in the concordance table (Appendix II) the order in which the poems of Joseph of Telkepe are copied in Baghdad 650 (1757), Habbi 3 (1931) — and in part in Hyvernat (18th cent. ?), Berlin Sachau 223 and Katola 4422 (both late 19th cent.) — with the order described by Sarau *Catalogue of Oroomiah* p. 20: 1. *On the divine economy*, 2. *On revealed truth*, 3. *On the explanation of Our Lord's words and prayer*, 4. *On the explanation of parables*.

words of Christ by Joseph of Telkepe.³⁵ A manuscript of the Library of the Hartford Seminary³⁶ may also belong to this group.

However, the majority of the *durikyātā* are known to us thanks to manuscript collections, compiled as anthologies of texts by different authors and usually entitled *ktābā d-durikyātā*, "Book of hymns". The oldest dated anthology we know of is the manuscript listed as nr. 650 in the catalogue of the Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate in Baghdad; it contains 13 poems and is dated Alqosh 1757 in the colophon.³⁷ Another anthology which would appear to be quite old is the Hyvernāt Syriac ms. no. 15.³⁸

The Berlin Sachau and Katola³⁹ anthologies were copied in the closing decades of 19th century: each consists of two volumes in which the texts are organized according to an approximate chronological order. Some *durikyātā* dating from the last century have been included in the miscellaneous manuscript of the British Library Or. 9321, ordered and paid for by Eduard Sachau. The London Sachau collection contains also the above mentioned *Book of durikyātā*, listed as British Library Or. 9322 (Appendix I). The texts preserved in manuscripts belonging to the Sachau collections are generally provided with an Arabic translation, either in separate manuscripts (Berlin) or alongside the Neo-Aramaic text (London). The French Dominican Jacques Rhétoré⁴⁰ collected two *cahiers* of *durikyātā*, which were used by Fiey for his *Assyrie Chrétienne*.⁴¹

³⁵ See the brief description in Scher *Manuscripts de Mardin* nr. 45, p. 78.

³⁶ This manuscript, at the moment unavailable, is listed as no. 209 "Verses in the dialect of Alqosh on the life of Christ" in Clemons *Syriac manuscripts*, and is described as having been written in the 17th century.

³⁷ Haddad — Isaac *Al-maḥṣūṭāt as-suryāniya* 307-309.

³⁸ I am grateful to Prof. Griffith for providing me with a xerographic reproduction of this manuscript, now in Washington. Parts of various texts are bound together in a quite confusing manner; shorter or longer sections, sometimes only a few verses, written in at least two different hands, are combined with scribal exercises and other material (a brief description appears in Griffith — Blanchard *Hyvernāt* 195). The ms. Syriac 14 in the same collection (Griffith — Blanchard *Hyvernāt* 194) contains *durikyātā* from the 19th century by David of Barezan (on this author, see Habbi *Turāt* 81-83, based upon *Recueil* 1954 p. 265).

³⁹ Berlin 223-232, described in Sachau *Verzeichnis* and Lidzbarski *Handschriften*; for a list of the contents of London Or. 4422-4423 (Katola collection), see Appendix I.

⁴⁰ A Dominican missionary in Iraq, Jacques Rhétoré (1841-1921) wrote the first grammar of the dialect of the plain of Mosul (Rhétoré *Grammaire*); he is the author of a number of Neo-Aramaic poems under the name of *Ya'qub Nukrāyā* "Jacques l'Étranger": see Fiey *Assyrie* p. 474 n. 2, and p. 680, Poizat *Jacques l'Étranger*.

⁴¹ Rhétoré's *cahiers* were seen by Poizat during his visit at the Dominican monastery of Mosul in 1973 (Poizat *Manuscripts de Mossoul*); Prof. Poizat informed me that he could not find them in the Library of Saulchoir (Paris), where the archives of the Dominican Mission of Mosul are now preserved. Fiey *Assyrie* p. 392 n. 4-5 quotes two poems from

The *durikyātā* continued to be written and copied in our own century. At some point early in this century, the priest Joseph Dadišo' Naggiar, prior of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Seeds in Alqosh, collected a volume of "les meilleures poésies en soureth".⁴² Two 19th-century poems were copied in 1931 in a manuscript anthology of Syriac texts on the Holy Virgin, now in the Vatican Library.⁴³ Another manuscript, copied in Alqosh in 1933 and known as Habbi 3,⁴⁴ is the most complete collection of *durikyātā* that we have at our disposal; it contains 24 poems from the 16th to the 20th centuries, arranged roughly according to the date of composition. A number of other 20th-century manuscripts containing *durikyātā* are now preserved in the Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate in Baghdad.⁴⁵

The text of some poems has been included in printed editions by the Dominican Press in Mosul and in facsimile reproductions in the periodical *Qālā Suryāyā* and other Iraqi publications.⁴⁶ Since the printed texts are usually from the 19th or 20th century,⁴⁷ it would be interesting to investigate which factors determined the predilection of the missionaries and the contemporary Iraqi scholars for late poems. Was the selection

the Rhétoré collection (*recueil de complaintes*); the first *cahier* is dated 1913 and also called "*ms de Mār Yāqo*". It is not clear what the relation is between Rhétoré's two *cahiers* and the *recueil de complaintes*, written in 1879 by 'Abdišo' of Mār Yāqo (= "ms. de Mār Yāqo"?). for the Dominican P. Louis Roulland (on the village of Mar Yāqo and its Dominican monastery, see Pennacchietti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 15). According to Fiey *Assyrie* p. 394 n. 3, the latter manuscript contains 4 poems by the 17th-century Israel of Alqosh.

⁴² Vosté *Catalogue* codex 330, n. 1. In the same footnote, Vosté says that he did not find in the Library of Alqosh two other manuscripts of *durikyātā*, briefly described 23 years earlier by Scher *Manuscripts de Notre-Dame des semences*: nr. 147, containing five *durikyātā* by 19th-century authors (David Kora, Darnyanos of Alqosh, Thomas Tektek Sinjari), and no. 151 containing two poems *On repentance* by Israel of Alqosh and "Mar Jean" (John Bishop of Mawana?). I have not yet been able to trace these three Alqosh manuscripts.

⁴³ Van Lantschoot *Inventaire* ms. 521.34-35.

⁴⁴ See Poizat *Complainte* 163, who follows Habbi *Udabā' as-sūrit*. In that article Habbi presents two other manuscript collections of *durikyātā*: Habbi 1 (dated 1931) and 2 (1938). Habbi 1 appears to be closely related to — a copy of? — the above mentioned manuscript listed as no. 650 in Haddad — Isaac *Al-maḥṣūṭāt as-suryāniya*. Habbi 3 has been reproduced in facsimile by the Chaldean Parish of El Cajón, near San Diego (California) and its contents have been described in an unpublished list by Pennacchietti.

⁴⁵ See Haddad — Isaac *Al-maḥṣūṭāt as-suryāniya*, no. 125, 652, 654 (no date, but it contains a poem by the 20th-century author Joseph 'Abbaya), 656, 661, 662. The catalogue does not mention the date of other manuscripts of *durikyātā* preserved in the same library: no. 650, 651, and 653 contain earlier texts, while no. 890 also contains texts from the 19th century.

⁴⁶ *Recueil* 1896, Habbi *Qaṣīda*, Haddad *Al-haḡma at-tatariya*.

⁴⁷ The only exception is the poem *On the pestilence in Pioz* by the priest Šomo (18th cent.).

simply a matter of taste? Was it based on pastoral and didactical considerations? Were there perhaps difficulties related to the language or the contents of the early literature?

1.3. Variations in the manuscript tradition

The philological study of the various texts has barely begun. Each poem or group of poems seems to have its own history, and each text has to be studied separately. A concordance table such as that presented in Appendix II is limited by the scarcity of published texts and must be properly interpreted. Texts that appear in the same row may be different copies of the same poem which vary in length and contents, as a result of the customary copyist and redactional errors; on the other hand, they may be different recensions, written or rewritten by different authors or ballad singers, which display the broad spectrum of variation typical of folk literature. Even though the *durikyātā* appeared quite early in manuscripts and clearly represent a learned form of poetry, oral tradition may still have had some effect in shaping the form of the texts actually known from late as well as from early witnesses. Since they were and are performed as lyrics of long hymns and songs, they have presumably undergone a process of, as it were, creative alteration through the use during the liturgy and in other circumstances. Each performance of a song creates a kind of rescript of the text.

The story of Arsanis Jimjimma and the *soḡitā* of the Robber and the Cherub are examples of Neo-Aramaic poems known to us in different recensions. The two *durikyātā* *On Arsanis Jimjimma*, although very different, appear to be derived from the same narrative archetype, having travelled different routes of oral tradition.⁴⁸ The popular *soḡitā* of the Robber and the Cherub, traditionally attributed to Narsai, is known in three Neo-Aramaic versions, the authorship of which is far from clear.⁴⁹

Although it is difficult to reconstruct the *stemma codicum* of the texts preserved in the various anthologies, in the case of certain poems, it is reasonable to assume that the variation between the available witnesses

⁴⁸ Pennacchiotti *Teschio redivivo* (ms. London Or. 4422 100b-103b) 126; *La versione neoaramaica* (from the ms. Habbi 3 407-412).

⁴⁹ The A version, attributed to David Kora or to a priest known as Marogen of Farashin, and the B version, possibly by the same David Kora or by Father Rhétoré, are written in the dialect of Alqosh, whereas the C version, probably by Marogen of Farashin, displays phonological and morphological features typical of the Christian dialect of the High Ṭyari and common to the Jewish homiletic texts from Nerwa (17th cent.): see Pennacchiotti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 13-17 and 115.

is the product of a normal manuscript transmission.⁵⁰ The omission of verses, stanzas, or entire sections is quite common, which accounts for the varying length of some poems.⁵¹

The date and author of a text can be problematic even for poems known in different witnesses of one recension.⁵² The date is sometimes inserted by the author into the text, usually in the last stanza of the poem in the case of Israel of Alqosh,⁵³ but normally we have to rely upon the information which is occasionally provided by copyists at the beginning or at the end of a text. Even then, fluctuation and uncertainty still remain.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding their inconsistency, the anthologies of *durikyātā* do provide information on the names of the authors, and the dates and titles of the texts. They appear to be a conscious reconstruction of the history of a genre, and not just a compilation of anonymous songs for the various liturgical feasts.

⁵⁰ The hymn *On Shmuni and her seven sons* by Israel of Alqosh is known from 6 manuscripts and the collation of four of them shows that it is reasonable to assume the existence of an archetype — in the more or less Lachmannian sense of the term — at the beginning of the tradition.

⁵¹ A few examples: Joseph of Telkepe *On the divine economy* numbers 592 stanzas in Katola 4422, 606 in Berlin Sachau 223, 702 in Habbi 3; Joseph of Telkepe *On revealed truth* has 112 stanzas in Berlin Sachau 223, 126 in Habbi 3, but 550 (*sic*) in London Sachau 9322; Thomas Tektek Sinjari *On the Holy Virgin Mary* has 45 stanzas in Berlin Sachau 232, 47 in London Sachau 9322, 49 in Katola 4423, and 50 in Habbi 3. The poem *On the Russian-Turkish war in 1877* is known in two different recensions: in the mss. Paris 427 and London Sachau 9321, the seven-syllable lines are organized in stanzas of four lines, whereas the compiler of the Cambridge 1130 version systematically dropped one line from each stanza, while nevertheless preserving a readable and comprehensible narrative text.

⁵² Some manuscripts do not mention any author, for example Berlin Sachau 223 f. 92a-123a; sometimes the information they provide is contradictory: the *durikā* *On repentance* by Hormizd of Alqosh is attributed in Berlin Sachau 223 65b-79a to Joseph of Telkepe, which is contrary to the rest of the manuscript tradition. The attribution to David Kora ("the blind") of a number of Neo-Aramaic poems which were in fact written by Jacques Rhétoré complicates the reconstruction of the work of both authors: "The fables (Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables*) and the hymns (*Recueil 1896*) were published under the name of David the blind, who assisted me in my compositions. The poems were attributed to him, since we hoped that doing so they could be better accepted by the indigenous", according to Rhétoré's account, quoted by Poizat *Complainte* 166. David the blind was the most famous Neo-Aramaic poet of his time: Fiey *Assyrie* 474, Habbi *Turāt* 90-93, Pennacchiotti *Zmiryata-d rawe* 645, and *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 13-14. Some of the same fables are attributed to Joseph 'Azarya in London Sachau Or. 9322.9 f. 130b (Appendix I).

⁵³ Israel of Alqosh *On perfection* (Sachau *Über die Poesie* 181); the hymn *On Shmuni and her seven sons* is dated in three different ways: 1611 in Marburg 3121, Katola 4422, and Rhétoré 1.6, 1617 in Hyvemat 15, 1632 in London Sachau 223.

⁵⁴ For instance the ms. Habbi 3 displays a suspicious regularity in the dating of the poems of Thomas Tektek Sinjari; this suggests some kind of editorial adjustment, especially since the last two digits of the dates correspond to the number of the item: the poem dated 1814 is nr. 14 in the manuscript, and so on.

A closer examination of the morphological and lexical variants may reveal that two versions of the same text are characterized by different dialectal features, leading to interesting conclusions on the provenance of the text. Comparing two pages of a manuscript which happened to come in his hands with a copy of the same text by Joseph of Telkepe, preserved in a Berlin Sachau manuscript, Pennacchietti was able to isolate a number of morphological and lexical variants, showing that the two versions of the text reflect two dialectal varieties of Eastern Neo-Aramaic: the two pages are written according to the dialect spoken in the mountain area near the Turkish-Iraqi border, whereas the text of the Berlin manuscript reflects the Neo-Aramaic of the plain of Mosul.⁵⁵

The most conspicuous source of variation among the manuscripts — and within a single manuscript — is the lack of a fully standardized orthography. The *durikyātā* are written in East-Syriac script, vocalized with the traditional vowel points. The modern language may be written in different forms, from a phonetic transcription to a historical-etymological spelling. The Neo-Aramaic dialects of Mesopotamia favour a predominantly phonetic spelling.⁵⁶ This represents a significant difference between the learned literary languages of Urmia and Alqosh, the two main Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects which gained — in different ways, times, and degrees — the status of written languages.⁵⁷

Macuch maintains that the phonetic spelling characteristic of Alqosh is probably due to the absence of those schools, publishing houses and periodicals which in Urmia allowed and encouraged a lively scholarly and ideological debate on etymology and orthography.⁵⁸ In Alqosh the lack of a standard orthography has resulted in just such an instable and sometimes less than reliable manuscript transmission.⁵⁹ Where the spell-

⁵⁵ According to Pennacchietti, the collation of the two witnesses demonstrates that the archetype was written in the dialect of the mountains, where the author — who came from Telkepe, a village of the plain — is thought to have worked for many years as a pastor. Alternatively, it may have been written at a time when the language of the plain still had those features which were ultimately preserved the longest by the mountain dialect (Pennacchietti *Due pagine* 701-702 and 705). The Berlin Sachau version would then represent a — later? — adaptation of the text to the peculiarities of the literary koine of the plain.

⁵⁶ Pennacchietti *Due pagine* 697; for the concept of Mesopotamian Aramaic, see Tsereteli *Aramaic dialects of Iraq*.

⁵⁷ Murre-van den Berg *A Syrian awakening*; Macuch *Geschichte* 70. The phrase “pork meat” is phonetically represented as *pišrā d-ḡzurā* in the Marburg ms. (*d-kzurā* in other mss.), where literary Urmia Aramaic would probably prefer the classical Syriac spelling *bisrā d-ḡzurā*.

⁵⁸ Macuch *Geschichte* 73; for the different solutions to the problem of the orthographic representation of literary Urmia Aramaic (19th cent.), see Murre-van den Berg *Literary Urmia Aramaic*, chapter 5.

⁵⁹ Macuch *Geschichte* 102.

ing is concerned, the difference between the two literary traditions (Urmia and Alqosh) was also noted by a native Urmi observer, who pointed to the texts by Joseph of Telkepe as an example of phonetic and non-etymologic orthography.⁶⁰

The following instances are paradigmatic of the possible variation in the Alqosh texts in representing consonants, vowels, and diphthongs:

— in many words, the graphemes <k> (or <g>) with *rukkākā* alternate with <ḡ>, reflecting a pronunciation [k] (with [ḡ] as contextual allophone);⁶¹ but a word like *mšiḥā* “Christ” would never be written phonetically, for the etymological spelling — and possibly the classical pronunciation as well — is protected by cultural restraints;⁶²

— the common and apparently bidirectional confusion between *rbāṣā* and *rwāḥā* (<u> and <o>) may reflect the merging of the two phonemes /o/ and /u/;

— the use of *zlāmā pšiqā* (<i>) where *zlāmā qašyā* (<e>) is expected seems to stem from the graphic inaccuracy of certain copyists;⁶³

— <w> alternates with with *rukkākā*, both probably pronounced [w]; as a consequence, /o/, followed by a consonant and derived from the reduction of the diphthong /aw/, may be represented as <aw, āw, ab, āb, ob, o>.⁶⁴

This fluid situation of the spelling may be a reflection of certain phonological and phonetic features of the language of the authors; in any case, it is a faithful portrayal of the speech habits of the copyists.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ The discussion by Oša'nā Išo' appeared in the Urmi periodical *Zahriri d-Bahrā* 48 (1897) 60a-c and is quoted by Macuch *Geschichte* 79.

⁶¹ In Habbi 3 p. 2, the number “five” is written in the same line as *ḥamšā* and *ḡamšā*; for [k] and [ḡ] corresponding to /k/ (etymologically < /ḡ/), see the above mentioned *ḡzurā* “pig” (phonetic representation), *ḡzurā* (phonological representation), and *ḡzurā* (etymological spelling).

⁶² Hoberman *Modern Chaldean pronunciation* discusses, among other things, the pronunciation of this very word and in general demonstrates how cultural factors such as literary register, stylistic flavour, and normative school tradition may preserve some sounds in both the modern pronunciation of classical Syriac and in certain registers of the vernacular language. Pronunciation and orthography are always characterized by a certain degree of variation: on the synchronic level, the spoken or the written form of a language reflect a complex stratigraphy of diachronical changes.

⁶³ In the case of a manuscript like Habbi 3, it is often almost impossible to distinguish between the two graphemes; see also Pennacchietti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 16 on the manuscript of the C version.

⁶⁴ Similarly, /ay-C/ > /ē-C/ can be written <ay, āy, ēy, ē>: see Pennacchietti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 19.

⁶⁵ The various phonetic and phonological features here studied in relation to Alqosh orthography are also discussed by Hoberman *Modern Chaldean pronunciation of Classical Syriac*, since the “vernacular language (of the Chaldeans) and their Syriac reading tradition are closely allied”.

2. The literary study of the *durikyātā*

Although in some cases it is possible to recognize traces of dialectal and diachronical variation, most scholars agree on the substantial unity of the language of the corpus.⁶⁶ A sort of koine, apparently embracing quite a wide territory, was used for writing a literature with a high degree of homogeneity in form and content. The prestige of the inspiring classical models probably accounts for this situation, together with the influence of prestigious cultural centres such as Alqosh with its families of professional copyists, the monastery of Rabban Hormizd and, later, the Chaldean Monastery of Our Lady of the Seeds.⁶⁷

The production of *durikyātā* is characterized by considerable continuity over almost four centuries. Macuch has provided a critical sketch of this history.⁶⁸ In his view, a less productive 18th century followed the propitious 16th and 17th centuries, dominated by prominent authors such as Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe. He indicates as the probable source of the crisis the uncertain manuscript transmission — as against printed editions which are easier to disseminate — and the illiteracy of the population to which the new literary tradition was addressed. Certainly all the factors mentioned by Macuch played a certain role, but since too few texts have been published and thoroughly studied, all speculation on the literary significance of Neo-Aramaic poetry and on its destiny is premature.

The following pages will focus on two issues which are of importance for the literary study of the genre of the *durikyātā*: the historical context in which the new tradition emerged (2.1), and the relationship of the Neo-Aramaic poetic production to its classical predecessors and to the literature of the surrounding cultures (2.2).

2.1. The genre of the *durikyātā* and the development of a literary tradition in the vernacular

The so-called School of Alqosh⁶⁹ represents a remarkable revival of Syriac literary culture among Christian communities in the territory

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Vandenhoff *Vier Gedichte* 390; Sachau *Über die Poesie* 180.

⁶⁷ Murre-van den Berg *A Syrian awakening*; Pennacchiotti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 103.

⁶⁸ Macuch *Geschichte* 98-99.

⁶⁹ A discussion on the history and significance of this term can be found in Murre-van den Berg *A Syrian awakening*; in the footnote nr. 31, the author quotes: Baumstark *Geschichte* 334-335; Fiey *Assyrie* 393-395; Macuch *Geschichte* 35-50. For the relation between the School of Alqosh and the beginning of Christian Neo-Aramaic literature, see also Pennacchiotti *Due pagine* 703.

which is now part of Northern Iraq. From the 16th century onwards, many Syriac texts were copied, thanks to a flourishing of interest in the transmission and study of the East-Syriac tradition. It is no coincidence that the earliest dated texts written in the vernacular language of the Christians can be traced to this period. From the last decades of the 16th century on, and especially in the course of the 17th century, a new literary tradition emerged which was deeply rooted in the Syriac heritage, and at the same time aimed at instilling new life into that tradition.

The same scholars who were engaged in the study and transmission of classical literature decided to write not only in the classical language, but also in a literary language which was based on the dialect, and reflected the linguistic development that the everyday Aramaic idiom had undergone over centuries. The new literature *in volgare* probably had to take a complementary position in respect of the still prevalent use of the classical language in liturgy and education. In the meantime, the modern language probably reacted against the prestige, the concurrence, and the diffusion of the literary languages and dialects of the surrounding cultures, such as Arabic and Kurdish.

Sachau proposed a sociological approach in evaluating the beginnings of a literary tradition in the vernacular language. In his view, the choice of the spoken language was influenced by the need for verses which could be understood by the illiterate and held a certain appeal for them. He imagines women and children gathered around the fire in a farmhouse and listening to poems composed by learned clergymen with them in mind. These popular verses may have been prompted by weddings and other joyful events and become a literary tradition, mainly thanks to fathers who wanted to provide their families with a certain degree of learning and education.⁷⁰

Taking a historical point of view, Pennacchiotti observes that the beginning of Neo-Aramaic literature may be better understood in the context of a new language policy among the Chaldean clergy. At the end of the 17th century, following the consolidation of Ottoman rule in Iraq and the improved living conditions in that area, a new attitude towards the spoken language emerged among East-Syrian clergymen, who realized the importance of the vernacular for their pastoral activities. Nestorian and then Chaldean priests began to write not only religious poems in Neo-Aramaic, but also various literary pieces in the languages dominant

⁷⁰ The gender-oriented approach in Sachau's description (*Über die Poesie* 180) sounds somewhat naive, but interestingly enough, the first authors of Neo-Aramaic literature are all married priests: it seems that, at least at the beginning, the new tradition was not linked to the monastic world.

in their respective districts: Turkish, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, and Kurdish.⁷¹

As regards the learned form of poetry, liturgy appears to be the context in which the poems in the vernacular flourished and developed. That the early *durikyātā* were probably used during the liturgy is suggested by the paraenetic character of most of them and by the frequent adaptations of Syriac liturgical hymns.⁷² The text of the *soḡitā* of the Robber and the Cherubin is performed as a holy drama during the East-Syriac liturgy of the Easter vigil and of the second day of Easter. Its Neo-Aramaic version — a *durikā* according to the manuscript tradition — is performed in church as an expiatory rite for the death during the week after Easter.⁷³ As confirmed by the collections printed in Mosul and reprinted in Baghdad, the *durikyātā* dating from the previous century were and are performed during the liturgy of the Chaldean Church. However, the specific liturgical use and *Sitz im Leben* of the various texts will require further investigation, since it may have evolved in the four centuries during which the genre developed.

One can imagine how the need for a learned literature in the vernacular arose within the context of liturgical and pastoral practice, where texts written many centuries before in the classical language were probably read and commented upon in everyday language.⁷⁴ On a literary level, on the other hand, the vast corpus of Syriac liturgical poetry shows signs of an emerging popular taste, easily recognizable in the style and the content of certain compositions.⁷⁵ The new attitude towards the spoken language favoured the development of a modern poetic production in a literary space that had probably already experienced some kind of fluctuation between classical and vernacular language, between learned forms of poetry and verses adapted to the understanding and taste of the common people.

It would be interesting to investigate to what extent this change in pastoral attitudes and language policy was related to the Catholic missionary activities which started in North Iraq in precisely this period

⁷¹ Pennacchietti *La versione neoaramaica* 169-170, and *Un manoscritto curdo*.

⁷² Pennacchietti *Due pagine* 703. See also 2.2 for Joseph of Telkepe as a translator of liturgical texts and hymns by George Warda and Khamis bar Qardahe.

⁷³ Pennacchietti *Il ladrone e il cherubino* 5-7, 11, and 75.

⁷⁴ The use of certain hymns in the vernacular language certainly does not imply that the whole liturgy was translated. The preservation of a liturgical — and more in general an old classical — language and the understanding of that language by the common people pose a whole set of sociological and psychological questions which go far beyond the scope of the present paper.

⁷⁵ Baumstark *Geschichte* 303-304 quotes as examples of this popular flavour Baumstark *Weihnachtslieder* and Rücker *Hymnen über die Magier*.

(16th and 17th centuries). However, the historical problem of the impact of Catholicism on the Christian communities in that area will require systematic study⁷⁶ and indigenous initiative cannot be excluded. Indeed, if for the choice of the vernacular one might think of a possible Western influence, the production and transmission of the *durikyātā* seem to have been quite independent from the influence or the control of missionary activities. Several considerations would lead to this conclusion.

First of all, as has already been pointed out, the form and content of the early Neo-Aramaic hymns appear to follow the tradition of late East-Syriac liturgical poetry. As far as we know, they do not attempt to introduce innovations into the liturgy or the literary tradition of the community.

Secondly, the transmission of the texts began quite early, following the traditional path of manuscripts and scriptoria. When, at the end of the last century, Sachau started to collect Neo-Aramaic texts, he encountered a tradition which was at least two centuries old.⁷⁷ He ordered and paid copyists who already had at their disposal a system — uncertain, imperfect, inconsistent, but nevertheless a system — for recording hymns in their vernacular dialects. This system probably arose along the fringes of scribal activities for the transmission of the classical literature and, as shown in the preceding section, it managed to develop and to continue in use up to this century. Even without Sachau's collections and in the absence of printed editions, the *durikyātā* were preserved in private collections of manuscripts, often handed down within a particular family, or in the libraries of the Chaldean monasteries, where they served as a record of a marginal, but living and continuous, literary production.

Furthermore, the predominantly phonetic spelling used in the collections of *durikyātā* did not undergo a process of scholarly standardization, as literary Urmia Aramaic did in the last century.⁷⁸ Nöldeke's harsh criticism of the choices of the missionaries in writing the vernacular of Urmia⁷⁹ could not have applied to the poems written in the area of Mosul, where the missionaries apparently had no opportunity to alter the older tradition. Rhétoré's negative reaction to the first printed collection

⁷⁶ For a lucid presentation of this problem see Murre-van den Berg *A Syrian awakening*.

⁷⁷ This contrasts with Nöldeke's conviction that it was only in the 19th century that the Western missionaries succeeded in providing the vernacular language with a written literary form, overcoming the general illiteracy of the native speakers and their contempt for the spoken dialect (Nöldeke *Grammatik* xxv-xxvi).

⁷⁸ See above section 1.3, with bibliographic references.

⁷⁹ Nöldeke *Grammatik* xxvii-xxix.

of *durikyātā* is significant: "The edition (*Recueil 1896*) was made without informing me and using texts written by ignorant copyists, to which correctors without method added their lights".⁸⁰ Father Rhétoré tried to explain his own method of correction in a grammar with a didactic aim,⁸¹ but his preference for a learned etymological orthography apparently had no effect on the spelling used for the transmission of the *durikyātā*. Habbi 3, which dates from this century, candidly follows a three-century old tradition of inconsistent, largely phonetic spelling.

2.2. Continuity with the East-Syriac tradition

With regard to both form and content, Macuch states that there is no significant difference between the vernacular and the classical poetry of the 17th to the 19th centuries.⁸² The emerging Neo-Aramaic poetic tradition is not only closely related to the Syriac poetry of the same period, but in general appears to develop in continuity with the East-Syriac tradition. If the ballad singers drew their inspiration from a rich repertoire of love songs, wedding hymns, and war songs,⁸³ the learned hymnist seems to owe much of his skill and inspiration to the late Eastern Syriac tradition. Our first investigation into the sources and the contents of the Neo-Aramaic poems reveal a clear dependence on classical models. In fact, a number of *durikyātā* are translations or adaptations of Syriac texts.

Classical sources are often explicitly mentioned in the texts: in the prologue of the poem *On the sin of Man*, Israel of Alqosh invokes the Lord's assistance in recounting the *Revelation of Paul*;⁸⁴ Thomas Tektek Sinjari quotes Palladius (*Historia Lausiaca*) and Augustine in the poem *Lord you are my refuge*;⁸⁵ Thomas Hanna of Karemlash mentions Barhebraeus, a certain Sabrisho' of Mosul, and George Warda in the prologue of his *duriktā On an attack by the Mongols on Karemlash, 1236 a.D.*⁸⁶ A Syriac model has likewise been established also for other texts

in which no source is mentioned. Joseph of Telkepe seems to have initiated a kind of programme for the translation or adaptation of hymns belonging to the East-Syriac liturgical tradition.⁸⁷

It is soon for generalizations on the degree of freedom and originality the Neo-Aramaic poet was allowed in rewriting classical models. The study of the *durikyātā* has only begun to attract scholarly attention and, as a point of comparison, the vast corpus of late East-Syriac poetry still needs extensive study. There is a wide range of possibilities, from free adaptation to an almost literal translation.

An example of free adaptation is the *duriktā On the sin of Man* by Israel of Alqosh (17th cent.). While the modern poem is based on an old Syriac source — as admitted by the author —, the way the traditional contents are presented is new, and may reflect the way classical models were used in late East-Syriac poetry. The author feels free to quote, alter, expand or summarize the classical model, in keeping with his own interests. In the Neo-Aramaic adaptation, the narrative and apocalyptic atmosphere of the Syriac *Revelation of Paul* serves only as a background to the moral exhortation and the vigorous paraenetic construction of Israel of Alqosh.

Joseph of Telkepe's adaptation of a Christmas liturgical hymn *On revealed truth* (17th century) displays a closer adherence to the form and content of the version in the classical language that is known from the *Breviarium Chaldaicum*.⁸⁸ The two texts display the same syllabic pattern and the same rhetorical structure. The stanzas of the modern version consist of rhymed verses, whereas the Syriac text has no rhyme. Where the occurrence of a sort of refrain reveals a series of three-line stanzas in the Syriac text, the corresponding Neo-Aramaic text regularly displays stanzas of four lines, often containing narrative details unknown in the classical poem. It is not clear if, and to what extent, the peculiarities of the modern *duriktā* are due to Joseph of Telkepe's originality or, alternatively, to his use of a different Syriac version of the same hymn.

The *duriktā On Joseph son of Jacob* by Joseph 'Azarya (19th century) is an example of the literal translation of a Syriac *mēmra*. The Neo-Ara-

⁸⁰ "L'impression se fit sans m'informer et on se servit de textes écrits par des scribes ignorants auxquels joignirent leurs lumières des correcteurs sans méthode." The passage is quoted and discussed by Poizat *Complainte* 166.

⁸¹ Rhétoré *Grammaire*, where normative prescriptions are quite frequent, especially as regards the spelling.

⁸² Macuch *Geschichte* 98. It is not surprising that an author like Israel of Alqosh (17th cent.) is celebrated for poems written both in the classical and in the vernacular language.

⁸³ Pennacchietti *Zmīryā-d rawe* 641-647.

⁸⁴ A Syriac version of this apocryphal Revelation has been edited by Ricciotti *Apocalypsis Pauli*.

⁸⁵ Sachau *Über die Poesie* 189.

⁸⁶ Habbi 3 406-407. I am grateful to Dr. Emanuela Braidà for allowing me to read her Italian translation of this *duriktā*. A poem on the same subject by George Warda has been published by Hilgenfeld *Ausgewählte Gesänge* 14-16 (see also Bundy *George Warda* 10-14 and Sauget *Un gazzā* 80-81).

⁸⁷ The *duriktā On the childhood of Christ* is a Neo-Aramaic translation of a 'onitā for the Holy Nativity by George Warda, which in its turn is based upon an apocryphal Gospel (Sachau *Über die Poesie* 185, Vandenhoff *Vier Gedichte* 391, 395-405, 405-415; for the use of the text, see Sauget *Un gazzā* 71-72). The poem *On revealed truth* contains a translation in the vernacular of another hymn belonging to the East-Syriac liturgy for the Holy Nativity by Khamis bar Qardahe (Baumstark *Geschichte* 321 n. 5; Syriac text published in *Breviarium chaldaicum* vol. 1, 334-337). The oldest collection of *durikyātā* by Joseph of Telkepe is preserved in a manuscript which also contains liturgical pieces by G. Warda (Sarau *Catalogue of Oroomiah* nr. 171 p. 29).

⁸⁸ See the preceding note.

maic poet simply borrows the syllabic pattern of the Syriac model, while marking with rhyme the couplets of his modern poetic version. The translation follows the original so literally that it is possible to identify the branch of the textual tradition to which the Syriac manuscript used by the translator belongs.⁸⁹

If the list of titles is a reliable cross-section of the contents of the *durikyātā* (Appendix II), it bears a remarkable similarity to the range of topics treated in late East-Syriac liturgical poetry. On the basis of the subject index, we can divide the contents of the Neo-Aramaic poems into three main categories: 1) poems on historical events, 2) hymns based upon hagiographical and apocryphal motifs, and 3) poems dealing with theological and exegetical issues.⁹⁰ For each category, precedents and possible models can be easily traced to the East-Syriac liturgical tradition. This scheme is in fact valid only at the surface level, i.e., the main subject of a poem, for in the texts "song, story and theology are closely intertwined".⁹¹ An account of a historical event may contain biblical quotations and theological reflections, just as the theological contents of a poem may suddenly be interrupted by a lively apostrophe on the historical situation.⁹² The authors are often inclined to weave hagiographical and historical material as well as biblical and dogmatic topics into a paraenetic discourse rich in *exempla* and moral exhortations.

1) Poems on historical events are quite common as liturgical hymns in the East-Syriac tradition.⁹³ In the second half of the 19th century, in particular, it was customary to write *durikyātā* on catastrophic events which

⁸⁹ London Sachau Or. 9321 243b-281b (Appendix I). The Syriac text was published in Bedjan *Liber Superiorum* 609-629 and translated by Rodrigues Pereira *Two homilies on Joseph* 106-119. The modern version corresponds to the Syriac text preserved by the Berlin Sachau ms. 219 (ms. B in Bedjan's *apparatus*), as is clear from a number of corruptions and omissions common to the two versions.

⁹⁰ The classification is borrowed, with certain changes, from Bundy's reflection on the work of George Warda (Bundy *George Warda* 15).

⁹¹ Bundy *George Warda* 15.

⁹² In the poem by Joseph of Telkepe *On revealed truth*, the author translates almost literally the stanzas of a liturgical hymn for the Holy Nativity, and then adds quite a long section, in which he incorporates — translates? — traditional themes of polemics with the Jews, and invokes in a lively manner the help of the Lord against the Moslems: "Come, let us glorify, oh Christians / and let us keep on praying him (Our Lord Jesus Christ) / so that he makes for us peaceful times / and he liberates us from the Moslems... Oh if he would like to establish (back) the Greeks (!) in our days, / so that we may rebuild our churches..." (Habbi 3, p. 121).

⁹³ Several hymns on famines, pestilences, and wars are attributed to George Warda: see the four poems dealing with a famine that took place in the region around Mosul (Bundy *George Warda* 11-14) in Hilgenfeld *Ausgewählte Gesänge*, and the *'oniā* *On the devastation of Karemlesh by the Mongols*, part of a liturgy for the commemoration of the death (Sauget *Un gazzā* 80-81) or of St Stephen protomartyr (Hilgenfeld *Ausgewählte Gesänge* 49 n. 5).

befell the Christian villages.⁹⁴ The 18th century *durikā* by the priest Šomo, *On the pestilence in Pioz*, probably served as an inspiring model for most of them.⁹⁵ Dramatic and painful historical events confronted the Christians with complicated religious issues. Trying to find meaning in the various disasters, some authors found an easy solution in the self-abasing conviction that they were caused by the sins of the community.⁹⁶

2) An apocryphal source has been recognised for the *'oniā* of George Warda, *On the childhood of Christ*, translated into Neo-Aramaic by Joseph of Telkepe.⁹⁷ The *durikyātā* dedicated to Mary or to the various martyrs and saints have an obvious liturgical function, being probably performed on the occasion of their feasts.⁹⁸ The life of Mary, the martyrdom of Shmuni and her seven sons, St George, and St Eugene are all well known in the Syriac apocryphal and hagiographical tradition. Their lives and deeds were narrated and celebrated in an endless and unmanageable series of poems and tales, often characterized by a lively popular flavour.

The poem *On the story of Arsanis Jimjimma* is — by the admission of the author — a Neo-Aramaic translation of an anonymous Kurdish poem, and gives rise to interesting reflections on the incorporation into Christian hagiography of Islamic lore material. This poem — which in Habbi 3 is attributed to Thomas Hanna and dated to the year 1930 — preserves a redaction of the story which enjoyed great popularity as far back as in the 16th century among the Christians living in Iraqi Kurdistan, as shown by the oldest prose versions in Syriac and *karšuni*.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ See the list in Appendix II. A poem *On a Kurdish attack on Alqosh in 1832* was written in the classical language by Damyanos of Rabban Hormizd: Rhéthoré 2.6 79-88 (Fiey *Assyrie* 392 n. 5), and Berlin Sachau 232 24b-30b, where it is dated 1855 (Sachau *Verzeichnis* vol. 1 p. 418). A *durikā* on the same subject by Joseph 'Abbaya of Alqosh is possibly a Neo-Aramaic adaptation of the same text. For a history of Alqosh in the closing decades of the last century, see Fiey *Assyrie* 392-393. Sachau *Reise* 363-365 gives a vivid account of the terror caused among the Christians by Kurdish attacks.

⁹⁵ Israel of Alqosh Jr. *On the pestilence in Alqosh* clearly contains verses inspired by, or copied directly from, the 18th-century poem (Fiey *Assyrie* 474 n. 2 and Poizat *Manuscrits de Mossoul*).

⁹⁶ See, e.g., in Šomo *On the pestilence of Pioz*, stanza 2: "À cause de notre conduite et de nos péchés, / notre villennie, nos actions et nos vices, / sa colère il nous a envoyée." (Poizat *La peste de Pioz* 228; see also Poizat *Complainte* 167). George Warda took a different position, remembering God's promises and arguing "that disasters have befallen both sinners and non sinners" (Bundy *George Warda* 16).

⁹⁷ See above, n. 87.

⁹⁸ In the Eastern tradition, hymns on Shmuni, St George, or St Eugene are attributed to such authors as George Warda (13th cent.), Isaac Eshbadnaya, Isho'yahb bar Meqaddam (15th cent.), Šaliba of Manšuriya, 'Aṭṭaye of Gazarta (16th cent.): see Baumstark *Geschichte* 330-332.

⁹⁹ For the complexity of the tradition surrounding this legend, see Pennacchietti *La versione neo-aramaica* 172-173, *Teschio redivivo* 103-105, 126-129, and *Giomgiomé*.

3) Repentance, which is one of the favourite themes of the *durikyāṭā*, is linked to various moments throughout the liturgical year. But the authors often deal directly with other complicated theological and exegetical issues. Israel of Alqosh inserts into the *durikā On perfection* a free poetic adaptation of the Nicene creed, explicitly claiming the authenticity of the Eastern apostolic tradition.¹⁰⁰ The poem *On revealed truth* by Joseph of Telkepe follows old Syriac material, also known to the Koran, in describing original sin as a result of the disobedience and fall of the angels.¹⁰¹

Other poems by Joseph of Telkepe have an exegetic content. The *durikā On the life-giving words* is a commentary on various passages of the New Testament. The author focuses on the Chapters 6 and 7 of Matthew, but also refers to other passages. The commentary is interspersed with moral exhortations addressed directly to the listeners. The poem *On parables* may be seen as an ambitious attempt to find a common interpretation for all of them: through the parables, Our Lord showed us that he came to accomplish the old economy, the law of Moses, and to announce his new dispensation both to the Jews, who did not recognize him, and to the nations.¹⁰² The poet gives a paraphrase in verse of the most popular parables, followed by a clarification of the story together with details.¹⁰³

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Sachau also mentions the possibility of a Kurdish *Vorlage* for certain Neo-Aramaic poems (Sachau *Skizze* 78), which unfortunately are not identified.

¹⁰⁰ "This is the profession / of our faith, oh Eastern people (*madinhāyē*) / that we preserved faithfully / from the time of the first Apostles... / The Jacobites altered it." (Habbi 3, p. 9; see also Murre-van den Berg *A Syrian awakening* n. 34).

¹⁰¹ Vandenhoff *Vier Gedichte* 418 n. 3.

¹⁰² *On parables*, stanza 136 (text edited by Lidzbarski *Handschriften*). Traditional motifs of polemics with the Jews are quite common in all the poems by Joseph of Telkepe.

¹⁰³ In keeping with the general purpose of the demonstration, allegorical interpretations are quite common: for example, the three sats of flour in Matthew 13, 33 are the offspring of Shem, Ham and Japheth, mixed with yeast to form the holy dough of the Christian believers; (*On parables*, st. 14-16); the Pharisee in Luke 18, 10 is a likeness of the Jews, who were proud of the law of Moses, but did not observe its prescriptions, whereas the tax collector is like the pagan nations, which erred but eventually accepted the lifegiving words of the Lord (*On parables*, st. 55).

Appendix I

Neo-Aramaic manuscripts in the British Library: London Sachau and Katola collections

London Sachau Collection

The British Library

Oriental and India Office Collection

Mss. Or. 9321-9328 (the mss. 9323-25 are bound together)

Or. 9321

Miscellaneous: Neo-Aramaic texts and Arabic translation

701 folia: an Arabic translation of the Neo-Aramaic texts copied on pages b is provided on the opposite pages a.

f. 1a "E. Sachau Nr. 1 17 Juni 1896".

(1) f. 1b-16b David Kora, *durikā On the Holy Virgin Mary* (*b-šimā d-bābā wibronā*; 120 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.).

(2) f. 17b-25b Prose stories and sayings of animals in the Ṭiari dialect.

(3) f. 26b-68b *durikā On the Russian-Turkish war in 1877 a.D.* (*b-go 'on dālitayutā*; 250 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.).

(4) f. 69b-101b Isaac of Alqosh, *durikā On a famine which occurred in all the East in the year 1879 a.D.* (*mšārē 'avdā ḥuṭāyā*; 75 st. 4v./st. 7syl./st.).

(5) f. 101b-105b *Soḡita of Satan and the sinner woman*¹⁰⁴ (22 st. 4v./st. 7 syl./v.).

(6) f. 105b-107b *Song of the Holy Virgin Mary*¹⁰⁵ (16 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v. AAAB; 1 st. 3v./st. + 1v. refr. AAAB; 4v. doxology AAAA).

(7) f. 107b-125b 7 metrical fables:¹⁰⁶ 7.1 the mice (f. 107b) 14 st. 3v./st. 10 syl./v.; 7.2? (f. 110b) 8 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 7.3 the fig and the ant (f. 112b) 10 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 7.4 the wolf and the stork¹⁰⁷ (f. 114b) 10 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 7.5 the lioness and the rose¹⁰⁸ (f. 116b) 4 st. 3v./st. 10syl./v.; 7.6 the mouse, the gazelle and other animals¹⁰⁹ (f. 117b) 24 st. 3v./st. 10syl./v.; 7.7 story of Kande¹¹⁰ (f. 122b) 13 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v. Each fable is followed by an explanation of the moral (4v. 12syl./v.).

(8) f. 125b-130b Joseph 'Azarya,¹¹¹ *Zuyāḥā* for the visit of Mar Elias Patriarch of the Chaldeans in Telkepe 1878 (19 st. 4v./st. 10syl./v.).

¹⁰⁴ Two classical Syriac versions of this dialogue poem have been published by Brock *Sinful woman and Satan*. A Neo-Aramaic version appeared in Zetterstéen *Ein Wechsel-lied*, based on two witnesses of the text preserved in Berlin Sachau manuscripts.

¹⁰⁵ Baumstark published an East-Syriac version of this lovely Christmas song (*Weihnachtslieder* 200-203; see also Mössinger *Monumenta Syriaca* 172-174, where the text is apparently attributed to Khamis bar Qardaḥe). The same song is used in the West-Syriac liturgy for the Holy Nativity (Dogan *Zmiroto d-'ito* 107-108), which would confirm Baumstark's hypothesis about the antiquity of the text.

¹⁰⁶ Texts of this genre have been edited in Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables*. When a correspondance has been traced, this is indicated in the footnotes.

¹⁰⁷ Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* 24-26.

¹⁰⁸ Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* 15-16.

¹⁰⁹ Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* 124-129.

¹¹⁰ Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* 55-59.

¹¹¹ Joseph 'Azarya is known as the author of two poems in Syriac *On love and friendly intercourse* (Wright *Catalogue* p. 691 and 696: Cambridge University Library

- (9) f. 130b-143b Joseph 'Azarya, 6 dialogue poems:¹¹² 9.1 *the gold and the wheat*¹¹³ (f. 130b) 16 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 9.2?, dated 1839 (f. 133b) 15st. 4v./st. 10syl./v.; 9.3 *the death and a fakir* (f. 137b) 10 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v. + 2 st. 12 syl./v.; 9.4 *the thorn and a boy* (f. 140b) 4 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 9.5 *the poor men and the rose*¹¹⁴ (f. 141b) 3 st. 5v./st. 10syl./v.; 9.6 *the flies and the boys*¹¹⁵ (f. 142b) 6 st. 3v./st. 10syl./v.
- (10) f. 143b-165b Prayers for several occasions: 10.1 before the Preface (f. 143b); 10.2 after the Preface (f. 146b); 10.3 Act of Faith before the celebration of the Eucharist (f. 148b); 10.4 Act of Contrition (f. 153b); 10.5 Act of Faith after the celebration of the Eucharist (f. 155b); 10.6-8? (f. 157b); 10.9 prayer of St Thomas (f. 164b).
- (11) f. 165b-187b Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (*b-šim 'avā wa-vrā w-ruḥā*; 74 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (12) f. 187b-189b David Kora, *Song of the fleas* (7st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB + 1v. refr.).
- (13) f. 189b-214b Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (*hayo d-mnonuḥ b-'alāhā*; 83 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (14) f. 214b-230b Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (*'alāhā d-kumar'ēlay l-'an qadišē 'an sahdē*; 59 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (15) f. 231b-243b Short prose tales about *mirabilia* by land and by sea.¹¹⁶
- (16) f. 243b-369b Joseph 'Azarya, two poems on Joseph son of Jacob:¹¹⁷ 16.1 f. 243b-281b *durikṭā* (*mēmṛā*) *On Joseph the Egyptian*, dated 1838 a.D.

ms. 2820 f. 120a and f. 153a) and as a copyist (Wright *Catalogue* 652-658 and 697: Cambridge ms. 2814 — possibly containing among the Syriac works a copy of the poem *On the pestilence of Ptoz* by the priest Somo — and the above mentioned ms. 2820, dated Telkepe 1882). Beside the *Zuyāḥā* for the visit of Mar Elias Patriarch of the Chaldeans in Telkepe 1878, this manuscript attributes to him 6 metrical stories, most of them published by Father Rhétoré in Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* (see further Or. 9321.9 f. 130b-143b) and two poems *On Joseph son of Jacob* (Or. 9321.16 f. 243b-269b).

¹¹² Texts belonging to this genre are well-known in Syriac literature: see Brock *Dispute poems* and *Dialogue poems*, where the *soḡyātā* preserved in classical Syriac are listed together with several Neo-Syriac versions. They are also popular in Neo-Syriac literature: Sachau *Über die Poesie* 192-193; Lidzbarski *Handschriften* xiv. Neo-Aramaic dialogue poems have been published by Zetterstéen *Ein Wechsellied* (*Satan and the sinful woman*, see above Or. 9321.5 f. 101b-105b) and Yaure *A poem* (the text of this dialogue between the boy and the tea-kettle, is taken from the Urmia periodical *Koḡḡā d-Madinkā*). Brock also mentions an edition of a Neo-Aramaic dispute between the man and the rose in *Huyādā* VII.8 (1984) 48-49 and observes that "the combination of personification and person is only once found in the Classical Syriac dispute poems" (*Dispute poems* 109 n. 2).

¹¹³ Berlin Sachau 336 80b-82b (Lidzbarski *Handschriften* xiv).

¹¹⁴ Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* 17-18.

¹¹⁵ Daoud l'Aveugle *Fables* 16-17.

¹¹⁶ Alexander the Great is often mentioned in these texts.

¹¹⁷ These texts on Joseph are known in classical Syriac and are traditionally attributed to Narsai: see Rodrigues Pereira *Two homilies on Joseph*. The text of the *durikṭā* 16.1 is a poetic translation of "the fourth homily" (see above 2.2). I have already transcribed and translated this *durikṭā* and I intend to publish it soon. The text of the *durikṭā* 16.2 is probably a translation of some version of the "first homily" on Joseph, edited by Bedjan *Liber Superiorum* 521-558. A poem *On Joseph son of Jacob* is attributed to Stephan Raïs: see Vosté *Catalogue* codex 330 nr. 3 47a-74a (see Fiey *Assyrie* p. 808 n. 3); *durikyātā* on

- (*šav'ē yāwmē b-bētā d-yāwsip ya'quv tuvlē*; prose summary + 200 st. 2v./st. 12syl./v. (at the end 7syl./v.) + prose summary); 16.2 f. 281b-369b *Another durikṭā On Joseph the Egyptian* (*ptuḥ-lē kumī yā māryā*; 460 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.).
- (17) f. 370b-417b Wedding and love songs from the villages of the plain and of the mountains¹¹⁸ (normally 3v./st. 7syl./v.).
- (18) f. 417b-418b Song in the dialect of the internal (*gawāyā*) mountain.
- (19) f. 419b-433b 6 popular songs in the dialect of Persian villages: 19.1 *going to school* (f. 419b) 6 st. 2v./st. 11syl./v.; 19.2 *the love of a son for his mother* (f. 420b) 14 st. 4v./st. 8syl./v. + 2v. refr.; 19.3 *the friend of the father...*? (f. 424b) 10 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 19.4 *the death* (f. 428b) 5 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.; 19.5 *the harvest and the work* (f. 429b) 10 st. 2v./st. 11syl./v. + 2v. refr.; 19.6 *the Naziritship* (f. 431b) 10 st. 2v./st.
- (20) f. 433b-450b 4 prose tales.
- (21) f. 450b-509b Lamentation of our Lord Jesus Christ, read on Good Friday, by Mar Joseph II Patriarch of the Chaldeans 1681 a.D. in the city of Amed, i.e. Dyarbakir.¹¹⁹
- (22) f. 509b-529b 24 short prose tales.
- (23) f. 529b-536b 5 humorous sayings.
- (24) f. 536b-620b *Story and proverbs* (f. 544b-561b) of Aḥiqar the wise.¹²⁰
- (25) f. 620b-670b 25 humorous sayings in the dialect of Karemlesh, Bareṭle and Baḡdeda.
- (26) f. 670b-694b David Kora, *durikṭā on Mary* (*libi mlē lē m-ḡibnuṭā*; 90 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.).
- (27) f. 695a: "Kifa des Priesters Gabriel in Bagdad, schr. in den Jahren 1896/97. Sachau 27.8.1897"; f. 695a-701a: 7 letters in Arabic, from the priest Gabriel.

Or. 9322

Durikyātā: Neo-Aramaic texts and Arabic translation

353 pages: each page has two columns: the right column is Neo-Aramaic, the left column is the Arabic translation.

p. 1a "Fellichi-Gedichte von Tōmā Singārî 4. anderen E. Sachau Nr. 2 23 Jan 1897".

Joseph are also attested in a number of mss. in the Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate in Baghdad: 652.1 f. 546 and 662.3 *On Joseph the just man* (Joseph of Genesis?); 890.27 *On Joseph son of Jacob*.

¹¹⁸ Neo-Aramaic wedding and love songs are also known from Socin *Die neo-aramäischen Dialekte* nr. 25 (Neo-Aramaic text 127-143, German transl. 207-213) and Lidzbarski *Handschriften* xiii. The texts published and studied by Pennacchiotti *Zmi-ryata-d rawe* are also performed during wedding feasts.

¹¹⁹ Another discourse by Joseph II is reported in the ms. 653.3 of the Chaldean Patriarchate in Baghdad (Haddad — Isaac *Al-maḥṭūṭāt as-suryāniya* 312).

¹²⁰ Here the evergreen story and the proverbs of Aḥiqar the Wise (Baumstark *Geschichte* 11-12) appear in an Eastern Neo-Aramaic translation. A Ṭuroyo version, translated from the Arabic, is known from the Berlin Sachau collection and appears in Lidzbarski *Handschriften* vol. I 1-77 (Arabic and Ṭuroyo), vol. II 1-41 (German transl.).

- (1) p. 1-20 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* ('alāhā d-kumar'ēlay l-'an qadišē 'an saḥdē; 80 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (2) p. 20-47 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (mšihā 'āyēt bēt gāwsi; 114 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (3) p. 48-61 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* On the Holy Virgin Mary (mšāruk b-šimā d-bābā w-bronā w-ruḥā d-quḏšā; 47 st. 4v./st. 12syl./v.).
- (4) p. 62-92 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (mḥaymnē mnono b-'alāhā; 124 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (5) p. 92-115 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (b-šim 'avā wa-vrā w-ruḥā; 94 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (6) p. 115-137 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (ṭaluk kšakl' shādt'; 93 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (7) p. 137-166 Damyanos of Alqosh, *durikṭā* On the Gehenna (māry ptoḵ-lay sipwāti; 117 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (8) p. 166-186 Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā* (hayo d-minonok w-ṭalbuk m-'alh'; 112 st. 3v./st. 10syl./v.).
- (9) p. 186-202 Damyanos of Alqosh, *durikṭā* On the Kingdom (māryā ptoḵ-lay sipwāti; 64 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (10) p. 202-220 Šomo, *durikṭā* On the pestilence in Pioz (šuvḥā l-šimē d-gavāln; 148 st. 3v./st. 7syl./v.).
- (11) p. 220-334 Joseph of Telkepe, *durikṭā* (šuvḥā lē l-'alāhā 'ityā; 550 st. 4v./st. 8syl./v.).
- (12) p. 335-353 David Kora, *durikṭā* On the Holy Virgin Mary (b-šimā d-bābā w-bronā; 112 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v.).

Or. 9323

Arabic popular songs: Arabic texts and Neo-Aramaic translation

73 pages: each page has two column; the right column is Arabic (408 st. 4v./st.), the left column the Neo-Aramaic translation.

Or. 9324

Arabic popular songs: Arabic texts and Neo-Aramaic translation

40 pages: each page has two column; the right column is Arabic, the left column the Neo-Aramaic translation (p. 1-30: 92 st. 7v./st.; p. 31-35: 33 st. 2 or 4v./st.; p. 36-37: 12 st. 4v./st.; p. 38-40: 30 st. 2v./st.).

Or. 9325

Letters in Neo-Aramaic sent to Eduard Sachau

3 letters sent to E. Sachau, dated 1880: 1) from a monk of the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd, dated 1880; 2-3) with a German translation by E. Sachau.

Or. 9326

Letters and other Neo-Aramaic documents sent to Eduard Sachau

89 sheets of paper of various sizes:

- (1) first 11 stanzas of a *durikṭā* by Thomas Tektek Sinjari (Or. 9322 nr. 4) with the Arabic translation in the left column; (2) Arabic texts with Neo-Aramaic (NA) translation in the left column; (3) letter in NA from Jeremiah Shamir to E. Sachau, dated Mosul 2.3.1896; (4-5) Arabic texts with NA translation in the left co-

lumn;¹²¹ (6a) first 9 stanzas of a *durikṭā* by Damyanos of Alqosh (Or. 9322 nr. 9); (6b) NA sayings on paper from the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen, Berlin 189...; (7-8) letters in Arabic from J. Shamir, with information about Syriac manuscripts; (9) classical Syriac text with a seal of the Patriarch's residence; (10-11) letter in Arabic from J. Shamir to E. Sachau, dated Mosul 28.2.1896; (12) list of Syriac manuscripts?; (13) classical Syriac liturgical texts or prayers; (14-24) letters in Arabic and/or NA from J. Shamir to E. Sachau; (25) letter in English from J. Shamir to E. Sachau, requesting money to pay "the scribes", dated Mosul 25.3.1897; (26-45) letters in NA and/or Arabic from J. Shamir or Johnan Zu'bi to E. Sachau; (46-49) letter in Italian from Samuel Ġamil to E. Sachau dated "Monastero de Madonna 22 ott. 1882", asking money and providing information about NA texts: "quanto poi alla sua domanda di mandare alcune narrazioni in dialetto di gēlū e di Tiyārī presentemente non ci erano uomini che conoscano questo dialetto."; (50-51) letter with several NA verses and the Arabic translation; (52-53) letter in Italian from Samuel Ġamil to E. Sachau, from the monastery of St George in Mosul 14.9.1881; (54-60) other letters and documents in Arabic and NA; (61-64) classical Syriac *taš'itē* written in *serṭo*; (65-73) letters in NA from Urmia (1865); (74-89) letters and other documents sent by J. Shamir in the years 1883...; (79) list of NA words; (86) 2 letters in English to the deacon Uramya/Ereimya (J. Shamir?) from R. Wahl and F. Gatro (?).

Or. 9327

The Gospel of St John in Ṭuroyo

182 folia. Translation by Isaiah of Kyllith (see Or. 9328 nr. 3). Copied in Kyllith (Ṭur-'Abdin) 1889-1890 a.D.¹²² The Ṭuroyo text (*serṭo* script in blue ink with red vowel signs) on the b pages is transcribed on the a pages.¹²³

Or. 9328

Documents in Arabic, Ṭuroyo and classical Syriac

- (1) two official letters in classical Syriac from the Syriac-Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople; (2) a letter in *karšuni* from the Syriac-Orthodox Patriarch Ignace Peter III; (3) a letter in *karšuni* and Ṭuroyo from Isaiah of Kyllith, author of the Ṭuroyo translation of the Gospel of St John (Or. 9327).

¹²¹ A note in the margin says that they belong to the genre of the *'atābāt*. Sachau studied and published a number of Arabic folk compositions of this genre: he ordered and received a collection of poems from Jeremiah Shamir (Sachau *Arabische Volkslieder* 32 n. 1).

¹²² Sachau *Reise* 420 mentions the school of Kyllith, founded by the American Mission in Mardīn, and indicates that the deacon Isaiah was a teacher there and prepared for the Mission a translation of the Gospel of St John in Ṭuroyo. The deacon showed him his manuscript and later sent him a copy of it (Sachau *Verzeichnis* 812: ms. dated Mardīn 1881). A copy of the same translation, now in the Library of the Union Theological Seminary in New York (Goshen-Gottstein *Syriac Manuscripts* UTS nr. 22, p. 127) is described by Heinrichs *Written Ṭuroyo* 183-184, who mentions other copies of the same text, which circulated in Europe at the end of the 19th century. Since the date of the New York manuscript appears in the colophon as 1877, it predates the London ms. Or. 9327 by 12 years.

¹²³ Tables of the transcription system are provided at f. 1b-2a. The transcription is in Roman alphabet with diacritics, apparently including suprasegmental features such as word- and possibly sentence-stress. A discussion on the transcription of Ṭuroyo is to be found in Heinrichs *Written Ṭuroyo*.

Katola Collection

The British Library
 Oriental and India Office Collection
 Mss. Or. 4422-4423

Or. 4422**Collection of early *durikyātā***

- f. 1a-2b (Partial) index of the two-volume collection: list of the *incipit* of 17 *durikyātā*, some copied in Or. 4422, some in Or. 4423.
- (1) f. 2b-72b Joseph of Telkepe, *durikṭā On divine economy (b-rāšit m-burīš brēlē šmayā*; 590 st. + epilogue 4v./st. 8syl./v.).
 - (2) f. 73a-86a Joseph of Telkepe, *durikṭā (šuvḥā lē l-'alāhā 'ityā*; 112 st. 4v./st. 8syl./v.).
 - (3) f. 86a-100b Mar Yohann bishop of Mawana, *durikṭā (šuvḥā l-šimā d-'ād biryālē*; 155 st. 3v./st. + refr. 8syl./v.).
 - (4) f. 100b-103b *durikṭā On Arsanis the king Jimjimma*.
 - (5) f. 103b-106b *durikṭā On Shmuni and her seven sons (ba-šmā da-ṭliṭāyūṭā*; 34 st. 3v./st. 7syl./v.).
 - (6) f. 106b-115b Yawnan of Thumna, *durikṭā* ("in the year 2181 of the Greek..."; 7syl./v.).
- f. 115b Colophon: copyist was the Chaldean Bishop Joseph Katola of Telkepe, 1989 (for 1889?) a.D.

Or. 4423**Collection of 19th century *durikyātā***

- (1) f. 1a-8a Haydayni of Thumna, *durikṭā (hayo mhāymnē mšihāyē*; 83 st. 4v./st. 7syl./v. + 16v. 'onitā).
- (2) f. 8b-19b Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā ('alāhā d-kimr'ēlay 'an qadišē w-'an sahdē*; 80 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (3) f. 19b-35b Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā (mšihā 'āyēt bēt gāwsi*; 112 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (4) f. 35b-44b Damyanos of Alqosh, *durikṭā On the Kingdom (māryā ptoḵ-lay sipwāṭi*; 64 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (5) f. 45a-62a Damyanos of Alqosh, *durikṭā On the Gehenna (yā 'alāhā mrah-mānā*; 117 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (6) f. 62a-70b Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā On the Holy Virgin Mary (mšāruk b-šimā d-bābā w-bronā w-ruḥā d-quḏšā*; 49 st. 4v./st. 12syl./v.).
- (7) f. 70b-89a Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā (hayo d-mnonuk b-'alh'*; 124 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (8) f. 89a-103a Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā (b-šim 'avā wa-vrā w-ruḥā*; 94 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (9) f. 103a-117a Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā (māryā ṭaluk kškl' shādīṭā*; 93 st. 6v./st. 7syl./v. ABABAB).
- (10) f. 117a-124a Thomas Tektek Sinjari, *durikṭā (hayo d-mnonok w-ṭalbuk m-'alāhā*; 60 st. 3v./st. 10syl./v.).
- (11) f. 124a-143b Šomo, *durikṭā On the pestilence in Pioz (235 st. 3v./st. 7syl./v.).*

Appendix II**Concordance table of some *durikyātā*****List of abbreviations and bibliographical references (per column)**

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| title | from the incipit of Habbi 3 or other mss. |
| date | dates reported by the compiler of Habbi 3 |
| Habbi | Habbi <i>Udabā' as-sūrit, Turāt</i> ; Pennacchiotti <i>Habbī 3</i> |
| Baghdad | Haddad — Isaac <i>Al-maḥṭūṭāt as-sūryāniyā</i> |
| Sachau Berlin | Sachau <i>Verzeichnis</i> ; Lidzbarski <i>Handschriften</i> |
| Sachau London | see Appendix I |
| Katola London | see Appendix I |
| Others | <p>Cambridge: ms. Or. 1130 of the Cambridge University Library</p> <p>Hyvernāt: Griffith-Blanchard <i>Hyvernāt</i></p> <p>Marb.: Assfalg <i>Syrische Handschriften</i></p> <p>Mingana: Mingana <i>Catalogue</i></p> <p>Paris: Briquel-Chatonnet <i>Manuscripts syriaques</i></p> <p>Paris Saulchoir: manuscript copied by B. Poizat (not published)</p> <p>Rhétoré: Poizat <i>Manuscripts de Mossoul</i></p> <p>Urmia: Sarau <i>Catalogue of Oroomiah</i></p> <p>Vat. Syr.: van Lantschoot <i>Inventaire</i></p> <p>Vosté: Vosté <i>Catalogue</i></p> |

The concordance table includes all the Neo-Aramaic poems in the collections Habbi 3, London Sachau and Katola. The other manuscripts may contain texts of *durikyātā* that are not listed here. Where a catalogue or a description does not give page or folio numbers, but only the numbers of the text, the manuscript number is followed by a dot and the text number. The printed editions marked with a * contain only part of a poem.

| Author | title | date | Habbi Alqosh-Bagdad? | Baghdad | Sachau Berlin | Sachau London | Katola London | Others | Printed editions |
|-----------------------|--|-------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Israel of Alqosh | On perfection | 1611 | 3 1-11 1 80-85 2 147-156 | 650.6 890.11d | 223 79b-89a | | | Vosté 330 1-5a? Hyvernât 15 14a-25a | |
| Israel of Alqosh | On the sin of Man (<i>Revelatio Pauli</i>) | | 3 11-20 1 85-89 | 650.8 | 223 93a-99b | | | Rhéthoré 1.7 | |
| Israel of Alqosh | On Shmuni and her seven sons | | | 650.10 | 223 200b-203b | | 4422 103b-106b | Hyvernât 15 11a-14a Marb. 3121 141b-142b Rhéthoré 1.6 | |
| Joseph of Telkepe | On the divine economy | 1662 | 3 20-110 1 1-38 2 168-227 | 650.1 651.1 653.1 125? | 223 125a-200a | | 4422 2b-72b | Urmia 109 (150, 171).1 | |
| Joseph of Telkepe | On revealed truth | 1663 | 3 110-127 1 38b-45 | 650.2 653.4 | 223 2b-16a | 9322 220-334? | 4422 73a-86a | Hyvernât 15 66b-72b Urmia 109 (150, 171).2 | Vandenhoff <i>Vier Gedichte</i> 3 |
| Joseph of Telkepe | On the life-giving words | 1590? | 3 127-153 1 61-71b | 650.3 653.2 | 223 16b-36a | | | Hyvernât 15 29b Urmia 109 (150, 171).3 | Vandenhoff <i>Vier Gedichte</i> 4 |
| Joseph of Telkepe | On parables | 1665 | 3 153-190 1 45-60b | 650.4 | 223 36b-65a | | | Hyvernât 15 29b-66b Urmia 109 (150, 171).4 | Lidzbarski <i>Handschriften</i> Pennacchiotti <i>Due pag</i> 1990* |
| Joseph of Telkepe | On the childhood of Christ | | | | 223 113a-123a | | | | Vandenhoff <i>Vier Gedichte</i> 2 |
| Hormizd of Alqosh | On repentance | 1608 | 3 190-208 1 72?-80 | 650.5 890.11c | 223 65b-79a | | | Mingana 51 14b-29b | |
| John Bishop of Mawana | On creation and resurrection | 1662 | 3 208-228 1 89-97b | 650.9 | 223 99b-112b | | 4422 86a-100b | Rhéthoré 1.2 | |
| Haydayni of Gesa | On the Blessed Mary | 1723 | 3 228-240 1 98-103 2 269-278 | 650.13 | | | | Mingana 567 156a-106b | |
| Hmarisho of Rustaqa | On repentance and the last day | 1724 | 3 240-245 1 103-105b 2 238-245 | 650.7 | 223 89a-93a | | | Rhéthoré 1.3 Paris Saulchoir | Lidzbarski <i>Handschriften</i> |
| Somo | On the pestilence in Ploz | | | 890.22 | 232 107b-123a | 9322 202-220 9326 6a | 4423 124a-43b | Rhéthoré <i>Grammaire</i> * Rhéthoré 1.8 | <i>Recueil</i> 1896 342-390 <i>Recueil</i> 1954 361-409 Poizat <i>La peste de Ploz</i> |
| | In honour of St Eugene | | | 650.11? | | | | Rhéthoré 1.4 Paris Saulchoir (fragm.) Urmia 184.3? | |
| Damyanos of Alqosh | On the delights of the Kingdom | 1856 | 3 245-256 2 35-51 | 652.2 | 232 17b-24b | 9322 186-202 | 4423 35b-44b | Rhéthoré 1.13 Vosté 330 121a-125b | Guidi <i>Beiträge</i> * |
| Damyanos of Alqosh | On the torments of hell | 1855 | 3 256-276 1? 2 1-13 | 890.11a 652.3 661.2 | 232 3b-17b | 9322 137-166 | 4423 45a-62a | Rhéthoré 2.1 Vosté 330 103a-111a | Guidi <i>Beiträge</i> * |
| Damyanos of Alqosh | For the Holy Virgin Mary | 1857 | 3 277-282 | 890.25 | 232 77b-80b | | | Rhéthoré 2.2 Vat. Syr. 521 115b-119b | <i>Recueil</i> 1896 265-276 <i>Recueil</i> 1954 251-261 |
| Thomas Tektok Sinjari | On the Holy Virgin Mary | 1814 | 3 282-292 1? 2? | | 232 39b-45a | 9322 48-61 | 4423 62a-70b | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|----------------|--|---|
| Thomas Tektok Sinjari | On repentance | 1815 | 3 292-306 1? 2? | 652.9 654.1 | 232 45a-54a | 9322 166-186 | 4423 117a-124a | | Sachau <i>Skizze</i> Socin <i>Die neu-ar.</i> 1882 |
| Thomas Tektok Sinjari | Lord, you are my refuge! | 1816 | 3 306-325 2 52-64 | 652.8 | 232 54a-66a | 9322 20-47 | 4423 19b-35b | | |
| Thomas Tektok Sinjari | On repentance | 1817 | 3 325-348 2 69-83 | 652.6 | | 9321 189b-214b 9322 62-92 | 4423 70b-89a | London Sachau 9326 1 | |
| Thomas Tektok Sinjari | On the monastic life | 1820 | 3 380-394 3 412-422 1? | 890.11b 652.5 654.2 | 232 30a-39b | 9321 214b-230b 9322 1-20 | 4423 8b-19b | Vosté 330 125b-131b | Habbi <i>Qasida</i> |
| David Kora | On repentance | 1882 | 2 154-160 | 890.10 652.4 | | | | | |
| David Kora | On the Holy Virgin Mary | | | 890.7 | 336 13a-17b | 9321 1b-16b 9322 335-353 | | Vat. Syr. 521 120a-123b | <i>Recueil</i> 1896 198-230 <i>Recueil</i> 1954 214-247 |
| David Kora | On Mary | | | | | 9321 670b-694b | | | <i>Recueil</i> 1896 276-308 <i>Recueil</i> 1954 295-327 |
| David Kora | On Adam and Eve | | | 890.13 | | | | | <i>Recueil</i> 1896 325-342 <i>Recueil</i> 1954 344-351 |
| Isaac of Alqosh? | On the Russian-Turkish war in 1877 | | | | | 9321 26b-68b | | Cambridge 1130 1b-12a Paris 427 22b-45b | |
| Isaac of Alqosh | On a famine which occurred in the East in 1879 | | | | | 9321 69b-101b | | Cambridge 1130 12a-15b Paris 427 2b-18a | |
| Isaac of Alqosh? | On the martyrdom of St Yunan | | | | | | | Paris 427 18b-19b | |
| Hanne of Telkepe | On a famine in the year 1898 | | | | | | | Paris 427 45b-51a | |
| Joseph 'Azarya | two poems On Joseph son of Jacob | | | | | 9321 243b-369b | | | |
| Israel of Alqosh Jr. | On the pestilence in Alqosh 1828 | | 2 249-254 | | | | | Rhéthoré 1.5 | |
| Yawnan of Thumna | In the year 2181 of the Greek... | | | | | | 4422 106b-115b | | |
| Haydayni of Thumna | Come, Christian believers! | | | | | | 4423 1a-8a | Rhéthoré 1.14 Urmia 184.2? | |
| Thomas Hanna of Karemlesh | An attack by the Mongols on Karemlesh, 1236 a.D. | 1930 | 3 394-407 | | | | | | Haddad <i>Al-hajma</i> 1977 |
| Thomas Hanna of Karemlesh? | On the story of Arsanis Jimjimma | 1930 | 3 407-412 | | | | 4422 100b-103b | | Pennacchiotti <i>Teschio</i> 1993 Pennacchiotti <i>La vers.</i> 1991 |
| Joseph 'Abbaya of Alqosh | On a hermit son of a king | 1912 | 3 422-433 | 654.4 656 662.2 | | | | | |
| Joseph 'Abbaya of Alqosh | On St George | | | 661.1 | | | | | |
| Joseph 'Abbaya of Alqosh | On a Kurdish attack on Alqosh, 1832 | | | 654.3? | | | | | |

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